



Washington State Transportation Commission

Wenatchee Valley Meeting Summary
June 15 & 16, 2021

Day 1: June 15, 2021

Chair Jerry Litt opened the meeting at 1:00 pm with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

Agenda Item 2: Mayors' Welcome

Presenters:

- Frank Kuntz, Mayor, City of Wenatchee
- Jerrilea Crawford, Mayor, City of East Wenatchee

Mayors Kuntz and Crawford welcomed the Commission to the Wenatchee Valley.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:06, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 3: Transportation 101

Presenters:

- Reema Griffith, Executive Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Tamara Jones, Senior Policy Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission

Commission staff provided an overview of the fiscal and policy framework of the statewide transportation system.

Presentation:
[Transportation 101](#)

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Link](#), starting at 00:07:14, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 4:
Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Overview

Presenter:

- Dave Bierschbach, Regional Administrator, North Central Region, Washington State Department of Transportation

Mr. Bierschbach provided an overview of the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) North Central Region including projects underway or planned, as well as sharing a broader perspective on the challenges faced by the region.

Presentation:
[North Central Region](#)

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:34:14, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 5:
Chelan-Douglas Regional Transportation Issues: The Big Picture

Presenter:

- Jeff Wilkens, Executive Director, Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council

Mr. Wilkens gave an overview on the challenges the region faces as well as the opportunities and successes that have been achieved. Wenatchee is one of only eight metro areas nationwide with no 4-lane connection to the Interstate System. There are two ways for the Valley to connect to I-90: the "East Gateway" - State Route 28 to/from I-90, which carries 50% of the region's import/export freight and provides a strong connection to the Columbia Basin, Moses Lake, Ellensburg, Yakima, the Tri-Cities, and Spokane; the "West Gateway" - US 97 over Blewitt Pass, carries 40% of the region's import/export freight, and provides strong connection to I-90 westbound and Puget Sound. The Wenatchee Valley currently has two points of entry. This is especially problematic during emergencies, such as wildfires, as evacuation routes are limited and become bottlenecked.

Presentation:

[CDTC Regional Overview](#)

For more detail on agenda item 5, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#) starting at 01:06:17, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 6:

Cities of Wenatchee Valley: Transportation Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenters:

- Frank Kuntz, Mayor, City of Wenatchee
- Jerrilea Crawford, Mayor, City of East Wenatchee

Mayors Kuntz and Crawford gave an overview of transportation projects in the Wenatchee Valley, including the Apple Capital Loop, the importance of partnerships in transportation projects, and the revenue challenges the area faces. Gas tax revenues received have been declining and the area receives very little federal funding.

Presentation: There was no associated presentation.

For more detail on agenda item 6, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:37:12, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 7:

“Complete Streets” & Equity

Presenters:

- Brooklyn Holton, Neighborhood and Communities Services Coordinator, City of Wenatchee
- Riley Shewak, Senior Transportation Planner, Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council

Ms. Holton and Mr. Shewak provided an overview on the Wenatchee “Complete Streets” program, which has increased the capacity of the transportation network, supported community and economic growth, increased transportation options for citizens, improved public health by enabling active forms of personal mobility, enhanced community livability and maximized the efficient use of public roadway infrastructure. Through “Complete Streets” the multimodal network approach can be a tool for removing transportation barriers and improving equity. The program received a perfect score from Smart Growth America, an international organization that evaluates growth based on ten main elements.

Presentation:

[Addressing Equity Through Complete Streets](#)

For more detail on agenda item 7, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:00:47, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 8: Transportation and Economic Vitality

Presenters:

- Kevin Overby, Commissioner, Chelan County
- Blake Baldwin, Director of Economic Development, Chelan County
- Trent Moyers, Director of Airports, Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority
- Alyce Brown, Executive Director, North Central Economic Development District

The panel discussed the growing tourism economy across the Wenatchee Valley. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic Chelan County experienced a 16% increase in lodging. The related increase in traffic volume has increased traffic congestion that is stressing the area's road network. At Pangborn Memorial Airport, commercial daily flights have expanded; however, there is demand to support additional expansion of both commercial and freight flights.

Transportation is an important component of the tourism and recreation sectors of the economy and plays a major role in the ability to attract new and returning visitors. Transportation effects the Valley's ability to connect travelers with goods, services, and experiences. While the Valley has sufficient hotel and meeting/event space to support large conventions, most conventions, sporting events and group travel will only consider locations within a two-hour drive of an international airport.

Presentation:

[Chelan County Transportation](#)
[Wenatchee Valley Transportation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 8, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:36:50, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time

Chair Jerry Litt reminded the Commission that the meeting will continue Wednesday, June 16, 2021, and recessed the meeting.

DAY 2: June 16, 2021

Chair Jerry Litt opened the meeting at 9:00 am with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

Agenda Item 10:

Alternative Fuels in the Wenatchee Valley

Presenters:

- Gary Ivory, General Manger, Douglas Public Utility District
- Doug Pauly, President, Northern Fruit

Mr. Ivory provided an overview of the Douglas Public Utility District's (PUD) Hydro Electric project, a renewable hydrogen pilot project. The PUD produces 2-tons of hydrogen a day, which is sold wholesale for industrial and transportation uses. Input cost is about 70%-80% electricity, which works well give the Valley has a lot of electricity. The facility is expanding to meet demand.

Mr. Pauly provided an overview of the electrification of Northern Fruits' fleet and operations. Potential savings in Douglas county are greater than elsewhere in the country due to access to hydroelectricity. Additionally, Northern Fruit is exploring autonomous vehicles, which could further reduce labor costs.

Presentations:

[Alternative Fuels Douglas County PUD](#)

[Northern Fruit - Fleet Electrification Considerations](#)

For more detail on agenda item 10, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:37, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 11:

Public Transit Issues, Challenges, and Successes

Presenter:

- Richard DeRock, General Manager, Link Transit

Mr. DeRock gave an overview on Link Transit's efforts to electrify their fleet, and ongoing safety enhancement efforts related to COVID-19. Link Transit has implemented six projects from their Vision 2020 plan, with another thirteen projects in progress. Link Transit has made a lot of progress in the electrification of their fleet with twelve electric coaches in service, three on order, and applying for funding for six more. In addition, they have installed four wireless DC chargers and fifteen wired DC chargers with Hot Start, a battery warming system. Link Transit has also installed twenty car chargers at park and ride stations.

Link Transit's fixed route average weekly ridership is starting to recover from the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are hoping that colleges and schools re-opening will lead to a full recovery. During the pandemic, Link Transit went "fare free." This has caused a number of unintended consequences; however, they plan to continue this practice.

Presentation:

[Link Transit](#)

For more detail on agenda item 11, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:45:29, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 12:

Apple Capital Loop Project

Presenters:

- Laura Merrill, Executive Services Manager, City of Wenatchee
- Richard DeRock, General Manager, Link Transit
- Jeff Wilkens, Executive Director, Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council

The panel provided an overview of the Apple Capital Loop project, an 11- mile loop which carries more than 100,000 vehicles a day. This is a \$286 million project, about \$145 million which remains to be funded. (Subsequent to this meeting, \$92.4 million has been awarded a grant from USDOT, for the Apple Capital Loop project.) The Apple Capital Loop is intended to provide safer connection between the waterfront and US 2, and to support economic vitality, while also addressing climate change, advancing racial equity, and reducing barriers to opportunities.

Link Transit expects future spending of about \$1.5 million in annual operating expenses for expanded services to support the Apple Capital Loop improvements, reduce congestion, and support economic future of the Wenatchee Valley.

Presentation:

[Apple Capital Loop](#)

For more detail on agenda item 12, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:28:13, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 13: Transportation and Human Services

Presenter:

- Richard DeRock, General Manager, Link Transit

Mr. DeRock gave an overview of Link Transit’s paratransit services in the Wenatchee Valley. Traditional paratransit services are expensive and do not meet users’ needs. In the early 2000s, Link Transit decided that they needed to make changes to meet the needs of users and improve their experience. Since then, to address these needs, Link Transit has enacted a number of changes. These changes include but are not limited to: using low-floor busses; fixed route services are free for paratransit eligible riders; invested in “travel training” for paratransit users; and increased frequency of buses serving major destinations of paratransit riders. An average paratransit user who receives travel training saves about \$40 per trip, or \$7,680 annually. (“Travel training” refers to teaching a paratransit user on how to use fixed route services.)

Even with these changes, the gaps between needs and services remained. To address these gaps, Link Transit has contracted with community organizations to provide a “Volunteer Driver Program.” Eligible users find their own driver and “pay” their driver with mileage vouchers, which will initially be distributed at a rate of 4 round trips per month. The volunteer drivers can be reimbursed at the IRS rate of \$0.52 per mile. The program’s annual budget is estimated to not exceed \$150,000. Link Transit expects to release a request for proposals in July 2021, with the program launching this fall. Through the program, Link Transit is able to provide better service that better meets users’ needs, with a smaller budget than traditional services.

Presentation:

[Public Transit Human Services Transportation](#)

For more detail on agenda item 13, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 01:54:44, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

Agenda Item 14: Commission Business

Reflections and Recommendations

- Given the CAC does not have a quorum, the comments received from its two members should be treated the same as comments from any citizen.
- The presentations highlighted maintenance and preservation funding needs which continues to be in synch with what we hear statewide, no matter where we go.
- It is important to look at how innovative local projects are funded and supported. These smaller urban areas have significant capital needs.
- Commission should do what we can to help support/fund the Apple Capital Project.

May Meeting Summaries

There were no revisions requested for the May meeting summaries.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

For more detail on agenda item 14, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 02:27:23, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Next meeting: July 20 & 21, 2021